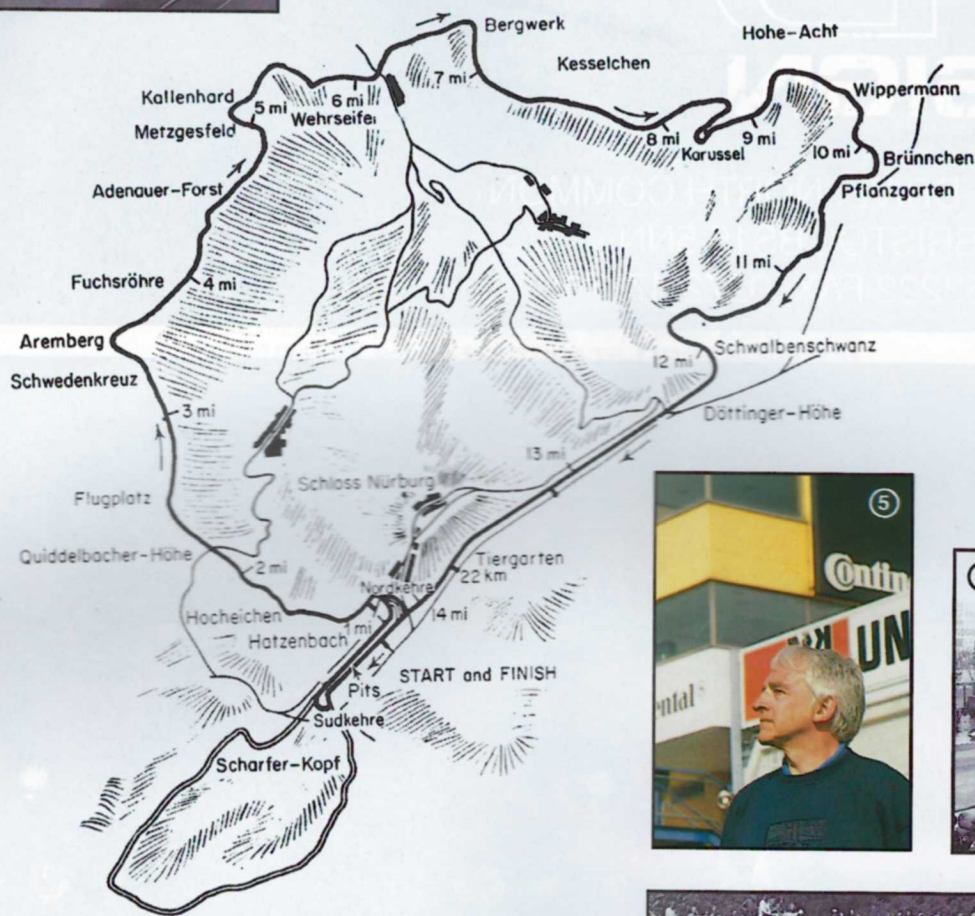




# TreVoR

Some 30 years since he last raced at 'the Ring' Trevor Taylor revisits the Nordschleife, the world's most daunting circuit. Much has changed but the challenge remains unparalleled.



## Nordkehre:

Because the new Grand Prix circuit sprawls over what was once the 4.8 mile Sudschleife -last used in 1960 - obliterating the famous Sudkehre and the first part of the old GP course, today the Nordschleife commences at the old Nordkerhe.

Thrown by starting a mile and a half into the lap, I was fighting to recall what came next. My confusion was heightened because this part of the track has been widened and is, of course, incomparably smoother than it ever used to be. To be honest, I had no recollection of this part of the circuit and the first, fast, downhill sweepers, gave no clues, yet I did recall that something nasty lay ahead. But what was it? At the 'Ring you could never play yourself in gently.





# at the 'Ring

## Hatzenbach:



A series of five consecutive tight left/right twists that do anything but flow, the Hatzenbach section is a fiery baptism. Basically you drop down from the new start and wallop - things begin to happen; and fast. Today the pine trees that line the narrow valley are tall, but all your attention needs to be centred on the high kerbs. Touch them in the TVR and you'll be thrown sideways by at least three feet. A sound rhythm and a good line pays dividends: get it wrong and the car will behave like a cork in a rapid. Get it wrong at Hatzenbach and not only will you lose several seconds, it'll destroy your concentration for the next five miles.

## Hocheichen - Flugplatz:



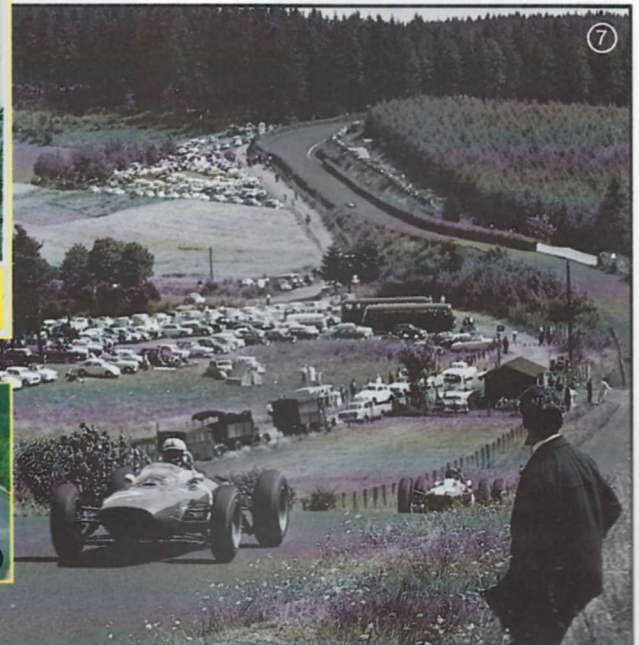
But if that's a rude awakening the next two twists give you the shock of your life. Hocheichen is a 90-degree right followed instantly by a tight 90-degree left that unfurls like a helter-skelter. Below and ahead the road plunges towards the bridge at Quiddelbacher-Höhe. Though not straight it's taken flat, as is the following crest, the infamous Flugplatz. Few cars get airborne here today but thirty years ago my Lotus 25 would have had all four wheels a good six inches clear. Because the track spears right soon after, it was always rather important to take the right line. It remains so today and the consequences are only fractionally less intimidating.

Clear of the valley, for the next 1200m the track runs atop a spine, before dropping through a succession of three or four flat out left-hand curves collectively known as the Schwedenkreuz. Almost every one is blind, the road being etched on the skyline. For the first time I slip the TVR into fifth and hit maybe 120 mph, but still there is no time to check the instruments.

## Aremberg:



Aremburg can only be described as a big corner but unlike everything so far it holds no surprises. A 115-degree tightening

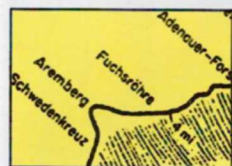


1. TT and Lotus 25 prior to '63 GP. 2. "I don't recall this one" - TT. 3. The '62 start taken from wonderful old grandstand. TT way back after engine failures in practice. 4. Stewart leads Cevert, Peterson, Lauda, Ickx and Reutemann into Sudkehe in '73 GP. 5. Grandstand and Sudkehe now lie beneath new GP circuit. New pits alien to TT, "Could be anywhere but in the old paddock I kept expecting to bump into Jimmy, Bruce and Innes."



right-hander, it calls for a touch of oversteer. Today the camber is more helpful and you can feel the g-forces build before the road drops away and down the valley side: in days past it was just bumpy and unpleasant. Either way, get it right and the car nudges the new kerbing before diving beneath a road bridge that marks the beginning of the Fuchsröhre, or Foxhole.

### Fuchsröhre:



Flat out in top gear in the Lotus 25 and the TVR, the road plummets steeply, wiggling left and right in between

giant conifers. Ahead the road is always in semi-darkness - and often damp. Then, as now, you should just aim straight, clipping the kerbs on either side. The only significant difference being that in the 'sixties the surface was so rough that you could barely focus. Far and away the most terrifying section of any race circuit anywhere, somewhat predictably the road kinks left just past the low point. Though less severe today, great gouge marks are still evident where cars bottom out. The trick used to be to brake early and then back off so that the car rose on its springs immediately before impact. The crash was still enormous, sending sickening shudders right through the monocoque and punting the car right across the track. With luck and a little skill, grip and control was regained just soon enough to prevent the car merging with the trees. After all the tension of the descent the climb to Adenauer-Forst is a pretty straight forward left and right

### Adenauer-Forst:

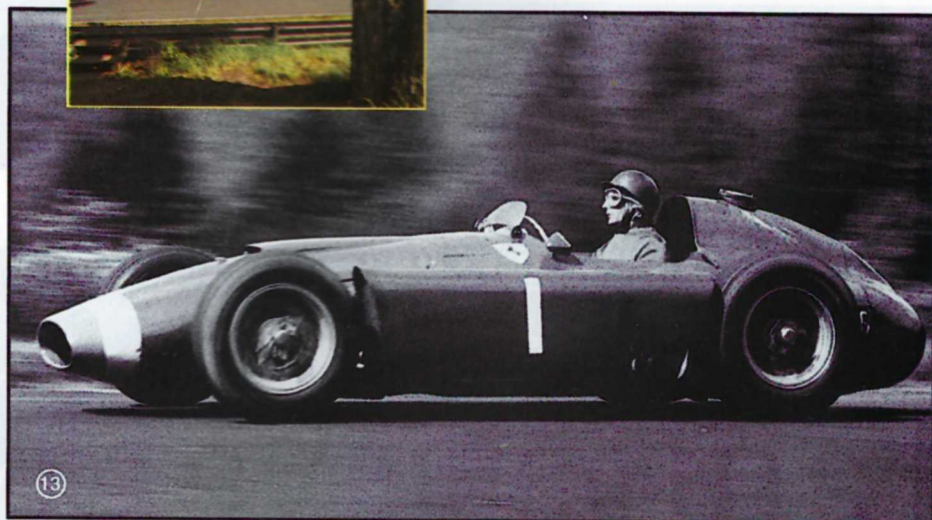


Like the Hattenbach section, a driver needs to study and work hard to get this 'sweeping chicane-

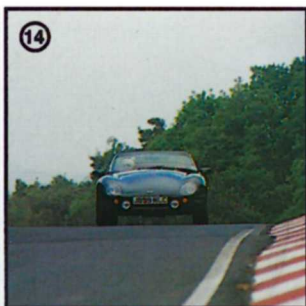
type section right. Prior to the German GP I once spent a week at the 'Ring practicing in a Ford Anglia. Largely futile, I learned little because everything looked completely and utterly different in an F1 car. The speed differential was so marked that you always missed your reference points - often because you were reclined and so much more of the circuit was blind - but it did help me master both Adenauer-Forst and the Karussell because whatever car you are in these bends can only be entered slowly. During that week I stood at Adenauer-Forst and watched how all the other drivers tackled it. It was a good laugh because most drivers screwed it up by arriving far too fast; hardly anyone got it right. It's like it was designed to surprise you - not once but twice,



6. Regazzoni leads Scheckter's Tyrrell through the fifth Hattenbach twist just before Hocheichen in '74 GP. 7. Down from Hocheichen, through Quiddelbacher-Höhe and into the infamous Flugplatz. 8. Flugplatz today. 9. Into the 'Foxhole'. "Still a fearsome descent". 10. Mechanic recovers Graham Hill's wrecked BRM from the Foxhole after celebrated practice accident for '62 GP where a loose cine camera caused three cars to leave the road. 11. Adenauer-Forst: "I had a good laugh watching the other drivers screw up". Here an AM DB4 GT does just that. "Many drivers carried straight on and ended up in the 50' deep hole on extreme left of shot".







12. "The greatest driver of all time". Fangio beyond Adenauer-Forst in the Lancia-Ferrari and on his way to his second out of three consecutive victories.

13. TVR in same place today, with Schloss Nürburg on the horizon. 14. Exit to Kallenhard 15. Into Wehrseifen Esses. (Arundell's crashed off high right) 16. Looking through Wehrseifen in the other direction. Adenau Bridge is in dip, TVR just visible on the incline beyond. 17. Peterson setting up his Lotus 72 into Adenau Bridge in practice for '74 GP 18. Pre-war shot of Adenau Bridge. Compare to photo 16.



and in rapid succession. Now there are big kerbs but the problem is that the first left-hander suddenly tightens beyond the brow and, unless you exit the first perfectly placed, you lose whole seconds on the next right-hander and a lot of time down the hill towards Metzgesfeld, over a kilometre away.

Again the road tracks along a spine. Although high and sometimes in cloud the absence of dark trees serve to lighten the atmosphere, providing the driver with a psychological-lift in tune with rising revs. Metzgesfeld consists of four left kinks. Now armco-lined - with the old hedges still in place behind - at the first you are always accelerating hard, possibly in top, the second usually calls for a feathered throttle and the third a downshift before the car drifts well to the right. The last is a delightful and open 70-left that is usually taken at low revs in fourth. For that reason most cars tend to run wide and skill is needed to maintain line, poise and speed. It is crucial to exit the last on the right line because the road is again about to plummet down yet another valley side.

### Kallenhard:



Like a miniature Aremberg, Kallenhard has more camber

and a steeper gradient. To me it was always the most satisfying corner at the 'Ring. Between Metzgesfeld and Kallenhard the road dips and sweeps right. Leave the former correctly and you'll not notice it, get off-line and it's plain impossible to charge through the helter-skelter that is Kallenhard.

Now begins the descent to Adenau Bridge, much of which has been resurfaced and all of which is characterised by precipitous drops into the valley on the left. Dense foliage helps to disguise the fact, but in 1963 Peter Arundell left the road here (Jackie Stewart's Armco arrived for '72) and when we tried to find him we discovered that the trees were not newly planted conifers but 80 year old jobs. Cleaving neatly through the hedge and scything through the tree tops, his progress was arrested before gravity took over and the car plummeted more than 100 feet. The large trunks made a mess of the Elite's fibreglass monocoque and what was left was not recognisable as a car. I recall vividly finding the engine and gearbox hanging high in a tree and the differential about 50 metres away. Arundell spent a month recovering in Adenau hospital.

With this in mind, today I find it hard to press on in the TVR. A flick left is followed by a very long right through which it is difficult to find the correct line. Just when you think you've found it the adverse camber will prove that you haven't and you'll drift wide -



too close to that edge.

The descent is interrupted momentarily by a classic S-bend at Wehrseifen which contours the valley side. Similar to the Adenauer-Forst 'chicane' - except that it's not blind - it's easy to lose time here by getting sideways.

## Adenau-Bridge:



Barely recognisable by virtue of diligent re-profiling, Adenau-Bridge still challenges. In fact, by number of rubber and

gouge marks on the bridge parapet - on the entrance to the corner! - it's still a bit of a bugger. As before you can't straight-line it and you'll still get it a little sideways. We always used to change down early to get the power on to get a boost up the hill on the far side. Less steep today, it's still far steeper than any other climb at any race circuit I know. More importantly the road curves right and the brow, totally blind, should be taken flat. My recollection is that it always was, even in an F1 car, but Stephan, Ruf's startlingly rapid test driver, says it's easy to drift left and fly over the top of the three-layers of Armco and off into the trees. So, whilst the re-profiling and new surface make it far faster, the challenge is probably similar.

## The Climb to the Karussel:

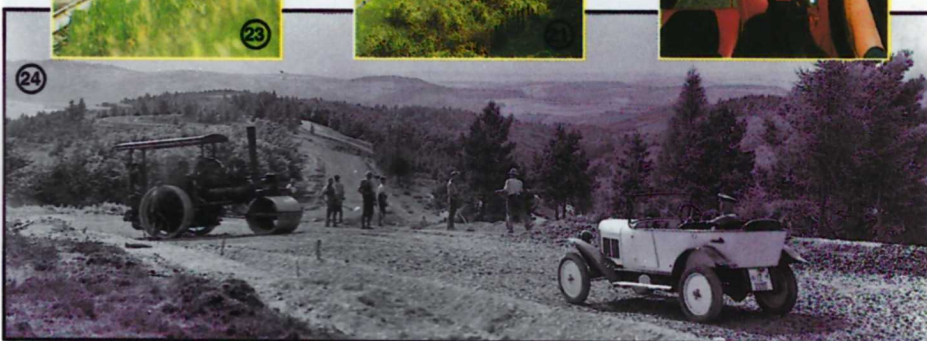
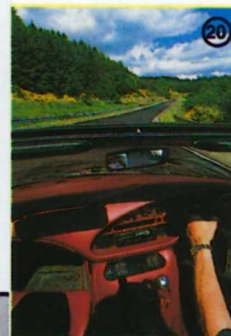
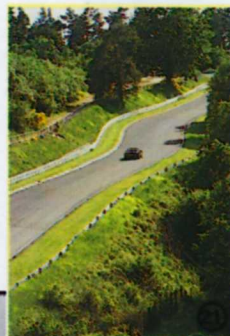


From here the track winds up the forested valley to the Karussel. It

could be heaven or it could be hell - it just depends on the weather. Flat to begin with and very fast, fast, it was hell for Lauda in 1976.

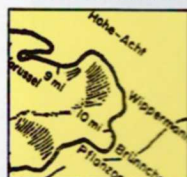
The only big corner over this 4.5 kilometre section is Bergwerk, which is where the climb begins. For this reason the exit speed is crucial. A 120-degree right-hand double - perhaps triple - apex sweeper (now with plenty of camber), you need to stay well left before turning in gently. Power should be metered in with precision so as not to squander an ounce. In the mid-'sixties I raced a Lotus 47 here which was quick through the twists but had a lot less power than the work's Fiat Abarths. On the climb I recall thinking 'if I can just get through the next bend before they pounce I'll be able to stay ahead for another lap'.

Now is the first time you've really enough time spare to check the gauges, but best be brief because in a fast car it's hard to find the correct line through Kesselchen. Again you bounce from kerb to kerb. The entry to the Karussel is a big lazy right-hander - not really a hairpin - where, as always, time can be lost if you let the tail hang out. After this, still climbing, the road wiggles but, as Jackie Stewart once described, 'you just head straight



for the tree in the distance'. True enough, but which tree?

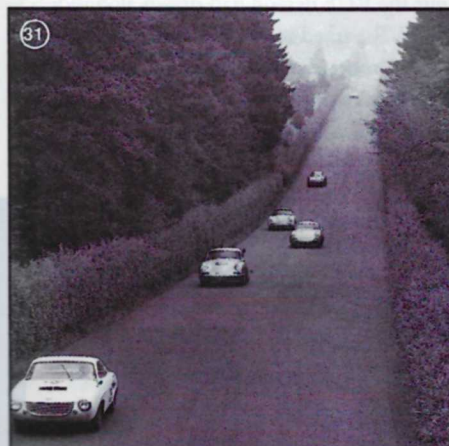
## Karussel to Wippermann:



The Karussel itself is completely overblown and is probably the easiest corner at the 'Ring. As soon as you see the concrete you place your right front wheel into the gutter. It's no more difficult than stepping into the bath. With a really powerful car - and if you are particularly silly - you could, conceivably over-do it and fly out, but essentially there's nothing to it: it just looks dramatic. As you grind through, the g-forces mount. You feel them through the wheel and the seat-of-your-pants. The Porsche felt as solid as a rock but the TVR reminded

19. Beyond Bergwerk - where Lauda crashed in '76. "Hard to follow correct line in a fast car". 20. Through Kesselchen - flat out. 21. The climb to the Karussel: "Head straight for the tree in the distance" advised JYS - which one? 22. Into the Karussel. "The 'Ring's easiest corner. 23. The climb to Höhe-Acht beyond the Karussel (Just just beyond surveyor's car in pic 24.) 24. Superb shot of circuit being constructed in early 1920's. Karussel behind roller. 25. Brunnchen: J Bonnier surveys wreckage of his Maserati. "I parked my Lotus 24 in the same place in '62.. 26 & 27. Carlos Pace and James Hunt leap at Pflanzgarten. 29. Moss on way to second place, Maser 250F in '56. 28. Ickx at the wheel of 'Cologne' Capri exiting Schwalbenschwanz. 30. TVR on wide home straight on approach to Tiergarten. Compare to narrow hedged track of 1950s (31) below.





me of all the old Lotus! The only problem is when to ease right; when to make your exit. In fact there has always been particularly whiteish patch of concrete, aim for it and you pop out like a cork from a Champagne bottle.

In fact the climb is not yet over and it continues for another kilometre to the highest point of the circuit at Höhe-Acht, a beautiful 90-right, as always, situated just beyond the brow. Inbetween are a brace of fast sweepers, again both blind and both taken flat, but coming so soon after the Karussell they are easy to remember. In fact, from here back to the start there is a definite feel of being on the homeward leg. Unlike the course so far there are no nasty surprises like Hatzenbach, Flugplatz, or Adenauer-Forst. Instead you can look forward to a rewarding sequence of fast, if testing sweepers before the long home straight. This part of the course seems to have been built with spectators in mind - rather than wrong-footing drivers - and always used to be packed out. Perhaps it's their presence that make it feel less daunting.

## Wippermann - Tiergarten:



The first of such is Wippermann. Approached via a quick left and right, the road dips significantly, rising suddenly and dramatically to the right before plunging again. All you can see is the brow flanked by trees, and the sky. So long as you remember it's a 90-right you can power all the way through, drifting wide on exit, but it's not until the very last second that you can see which way the roads goes next. Care is needed because the camber wains at the track's edge. Today a rumble strip has replaced jagged kerbs. Like Kallenhard, getting Wippermann right is a big, big thrill.

Without a slack in pace the road just continues to dive, twist and turn through Brünchen (the old bridge has gone and the track has been raised by 12 meters to reduce the drop) and climb right and left through Pflanzgarten. Here the road has changed little and beyond the armco I even caught a glance of the trees against which I deposited the Lotus 24 in practice for the '62 GP. For the next 2 kilometres the road writhes up and down and from left to right but you just drive it as you see it, safe in the knowledge that the road tracks faithfully beyond each of the brows encountered before the Schwalbenschwanz (Swallowtail). This starts with a long adversely-cambered right-hander which is a little deceptive. The second left-hander is banked. Like a 'mini-Karussell', it should be should be tackled in exactly the same way. The final curve is another climbing right-hander but this one goes on forever. The true apex being about 250 metres beyond the obvious one. Provided you remember that, again it's plain sailing.

Of all the changes to the circuit carried out at the behest of the GPDA in early 1972, those made to the main straight are the most obvious. Nowadays it is almost twice as wide and gone are the hump-back bridges, hedgerows and isolated trees. Today it looks like the M1 and is a lot safer for it. In the wet the rain used to form great puddles which you could not always see. When traversed at 180 mph the tyres would aquaplane momentarily and the car would snake sideways. Often only by good fortune were you facing in the same direction when the tyres regained grip.

*Special thanks to the Nürburgring Circuit Authorities, LAT Photographic and the National Motor Museum for active material. Colour photographs by Pink Wetselaar.*